Sanitized - Approved For Release CIA-RDP75-0

[redacted]

FOIAb3b

Partridge Assails AF Defense Cuts

AF Leader Says Threat of Soviet Missiles Attack Is 'Frightening'

By John G. Norris
Staff Reporter

Gen. Earle E. Partridge, the Nation's air defense chief, has warned that "the threat of Soviet attack by ICBM (missiles) is so frightening" that the United States must give top priority to development of an "anti-missile missile" to counter it.

Heretofore secret testimony of the commander-in-chief of the Continental Air Defense Command, released yesterday, showed Partridge concerned about present and future weaknesses in defense against manned Russian bombers, but briefly worried about the intercontinental ballistics missile.

Partridge's disclosures were made public by the Senate Armed Services Subcommittee investigating Russian vs. American air power, after careful editing by Pentagon censors for security. As drawn out by Senators, his answers revealed both the United States and Western Europe inadequately prepared against nuclear attack from the skies.

Many of the weaknesses, Partridge said, were due to Administration cuts in the Air Force budget.

The Continental Air Defense Command today is only 80 per cent manned, and the situation will get worse in coming months, he declared. Because of difficulties in getting skilled aircraft maintenance crews to reenlist, Partridge proposed hiring of civilians for many of the mechanics' jobs.

Partridge said he had proposed hiring 7000 civilian technicians but it had been denied.

Telling of heavy cutbacks during the past three years in funds asked for bases construction and maintenance and operation, Partridge said they affected combat effectiveness.

Radar warning, the speed and altitude of fighter planes, and control [illegible] not what they should be, Partridge declared. Present defenses can adequately defend against the Soviet TU-4 bombers—counterpart of our B-29—but "unfortunately the Russians came along a little more rapidly than we had anticipated" and put in jet bombers earlier than forecast.

"As a result," Partridge added, "we find ourselves in the years 1957, 1958 and early 1959 in not too good shape with regard to our high-altitude and our low-altitude air defense."

"National" intelligence estimates—those agreed upon by all intelligence authorities—agree, he said, that the Reds have sufficient air power to launch an attack on the United States with "hundreds of bombers" this year. The situation will grow worse in 1958 and 1959, he said.

But Partridge said "we have plans to remedy these deficiencies," and he is more concerned about intercontinental ballistic missiles that can carry a hydrogen warhead half way across the globe in less than 30 minutes.

"We have to do something about an object which appears suddenly in the sky, which goes to an altitude of about 500 miles and goes at a speed of Mach 20 (20 times the speed of sound)," he testified.

"Personally this seems an almost insoluble problem, but our scientists say it can be done and that we should be getting along with it."

The threat is so "frightening to me," he added, that the Nation must put as much effort into developing a missile that can shoot it down. The ICBM now has overriding priority in funds and research funds over all other weapons except the intermediate range ballistic missile, and Partridge's words meant he was calling for a similar all-out effort for the anti-ICBM missle.

Partridge said American scientists feel they have solved the problem "in principle."

Partridge also testified:

- Russia has 550,000 people manning its air defense bases, compared to 140,000 in the United States. Soviet radar is "comparable" to ours technically, but they do not have as good coverage around their longer borders as this Nation.
- Current United States air defense fighters, the F-86, F-89 and F-94, are "obsolescent" and the "unreliability" of their fire control system "downgrades" their effectiveness.
- The Civil Aeronautics Administration fails to "appreciate the complexity" of the air traffic control problem.

CPYRGHT

CPYRGHT

For Release : CIA-RDP75-00149R000600180031-6